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WLW
CINCINNATI

FORTUNES WASHED AWAY

115
P.M. - E.S.T.

A SERIES OF DRAMATIZATIONS OF BETTER LAND USE.

No. 179

"JOYCE KILMER -- AND TREES"

September 27, 1941

ORGAN THEME: DEEP RIVER

VOICE

We took it for granted that land was everlasting;

We said ownership of the land insured security.

Tools would wear out, men would die --

But the land would remain.

ORGAN: ABRUPT DISCORD

ANNOUNCER

Fortunes Washed Away!

ORGAN: Symbolic music behind...

NARRATOR

Yes, we took it for granted that land was everlasting. Today,
millions of acres of once-valuable farmlands have been ruined by
soil erosion. But let me tell you about land that will be everlasting.
It's a living memorial to Joyce Kilmer...(FADE)

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ANNOUNCER

A living memorial -- tucked away in the heart of the forests of North Carolina. Here, under the shadow of the Snowbird Mountains, is a virgin forest of unbelievable beauty...forest monarchs, lifting their arms toward the sunlight of the heavens, thrusting their roots into virgin soil -- trees, ageless in dignity, timeless in splendor. A few years ago, two men climbed a frozen trail along Lake Santeetlah....(FADE)

SOUND: Occasional gust of mournful wind...

NARRATOR

It was cold. Leaves of laurel and rhododendron had curled up. The earth under our hob nails had a dull, metallic ring. Since noon we had seen no road, no house, no sign of a human being. Roy stopped a moment.

ROY

Wait a minute, Elliott.

ELLIOTT

Trouble?

ROY

I just want to light my pipe.

ELLIOTT

You sound sort of grim, Roy.

ROY

Well, frankly...we're in a mess. Darn this tobacco, anyhow!

ELLIOTT

It's not the tobacco that's worrying you. You know, I'm not used to this mountain country. What's up, Roy?

ROY

We're lost.

ELLIOTT

Lost?

ROY

Lost. We're either on the wrong trail, or we've passed Murphy's place without seeing it.

ELLIOTT (resigned)

Okay. What now?

ROY

Best thing to do is to go on until we find enough wood to build a big fire and bed down for the night.

ELLIOTT

What about grub?

ROY

We can make some hot chocolate out of these candy bars in my duffle bag. Come on.

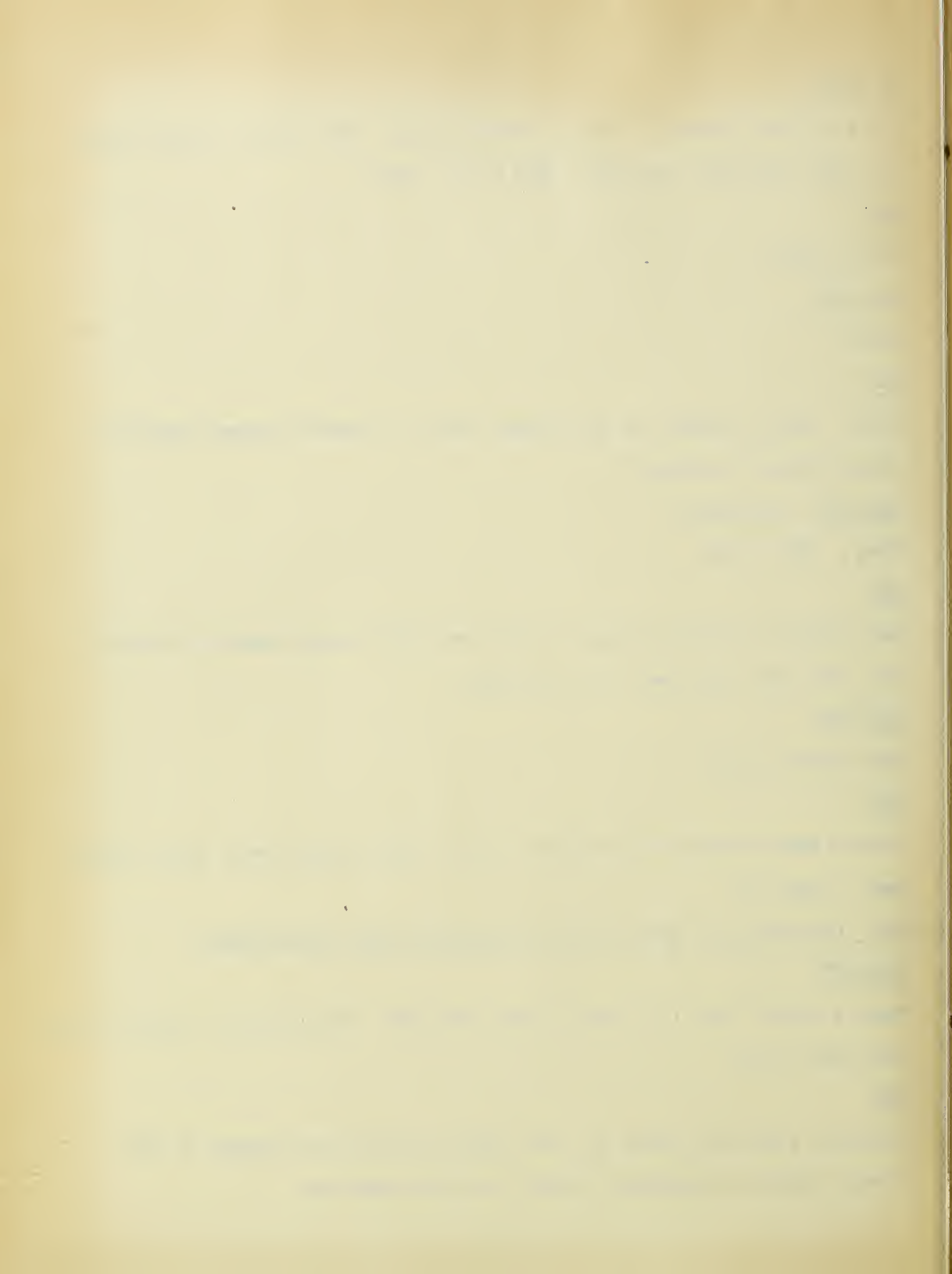
SOUND: Crunching of men's feet along path thru following...

ELLIOTT

What a sight this is, these trees and all! They make me almost forget how cold I am.

ROY

Elliott, you don't know it, but right now you're looking at the finest stand of hardwood timber in North America.



ELLIOTT

And to think that it'll soon be sold as lumber. It's a shame to realize that logging crews will come in here, cutting and slashing, leaving a trail of stumps and bare ground, leaving the ground open to wash away. Can't anything be done about it?

ROY

Guess not. Oh, some conservationists have made a few feeble efforts to save the forest. I'm like you -- what a pity that these giant living creatures must be made into lifeless boards of lumber.

ELLIOTT

It doesn't seem right, Roy.

ROY

No, it doesn't. It doesn't seem right that human beings should be allowed the brain and the power for such destruction. Oh, if only I could....(FADE)

NARRATOR

On and on we trudged through the forest. The wind howled, and sleet pattered against our half-frozen cheeks. Then -- (DRAMATIC PAUSE) suddenly we came on a rough picket fence. Beyond it appeared the outline of a log cabin with lanterns shining through yellow windows.

ROY (sighing with relief)

Must be Murphy's!

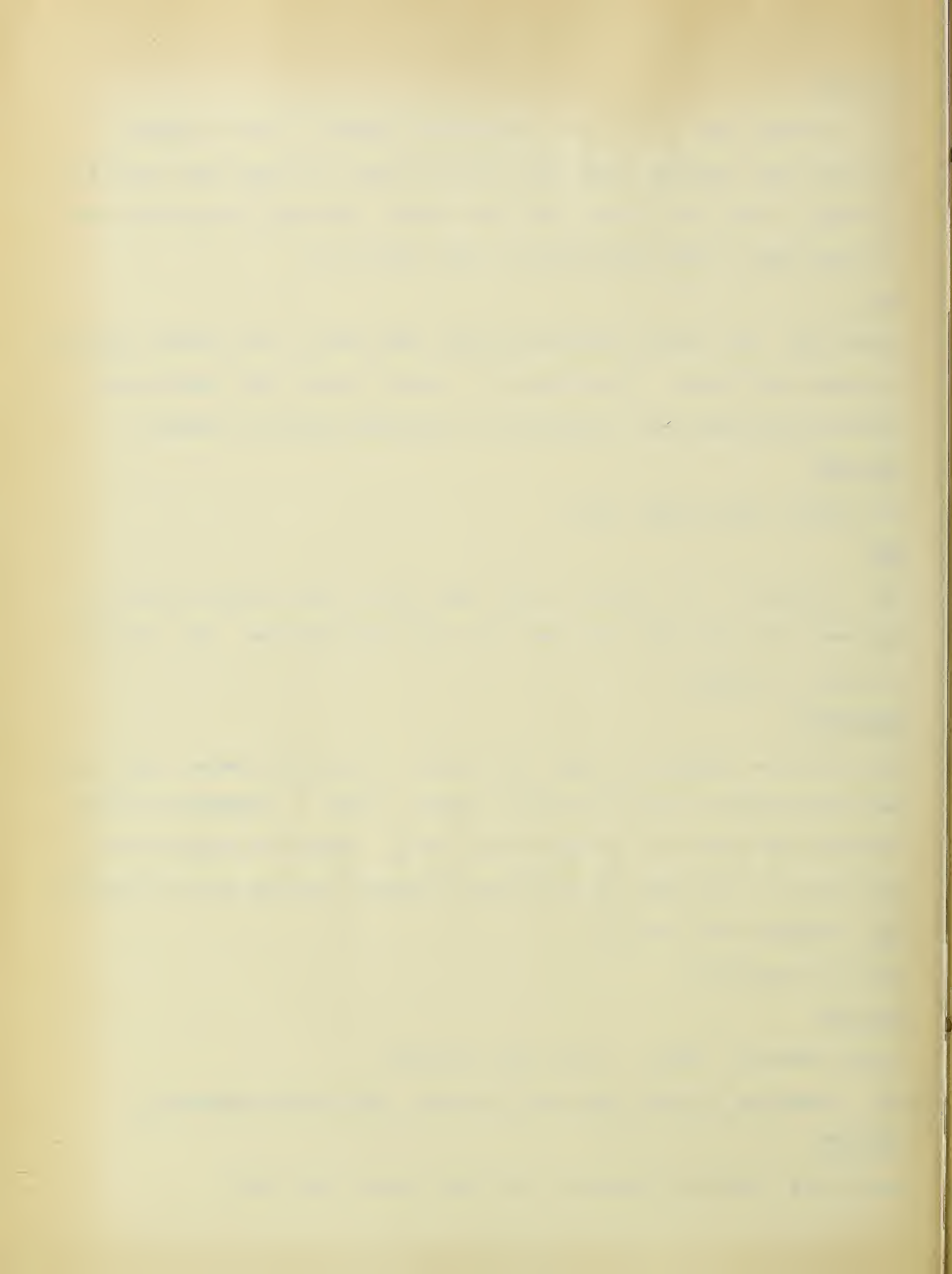
ELLIOTT

Thank heavens! Here....I'll get the gate.

SOUND: Creaking of gate opens and closed. Dogs bark savagely...

ELLIOTT

Look out! They're vicious! Get down, you! Get down!



ROY

Don't worry.

ELLIOTT

Get down!

ROY

Aw, shut up! Save your growls for the revenooers.

SOUND: Dogs subside and whine in friendly tone...

ELLIOTT

Well, I'll be darned. I believe you could make friends with a pack of wolves.

ROY

You just got to know how to handle 'em.

SOUND: Knock on door...

ELLIOTT (almost to himself)

Hurry up, whoever is in there. I'm about frozen.

SOUND: Door opens...

MURPHY

Well?

ELLIOTT

We're looking for Mr. Murphy.

MURPHY

I'm him.

ELLIOTT

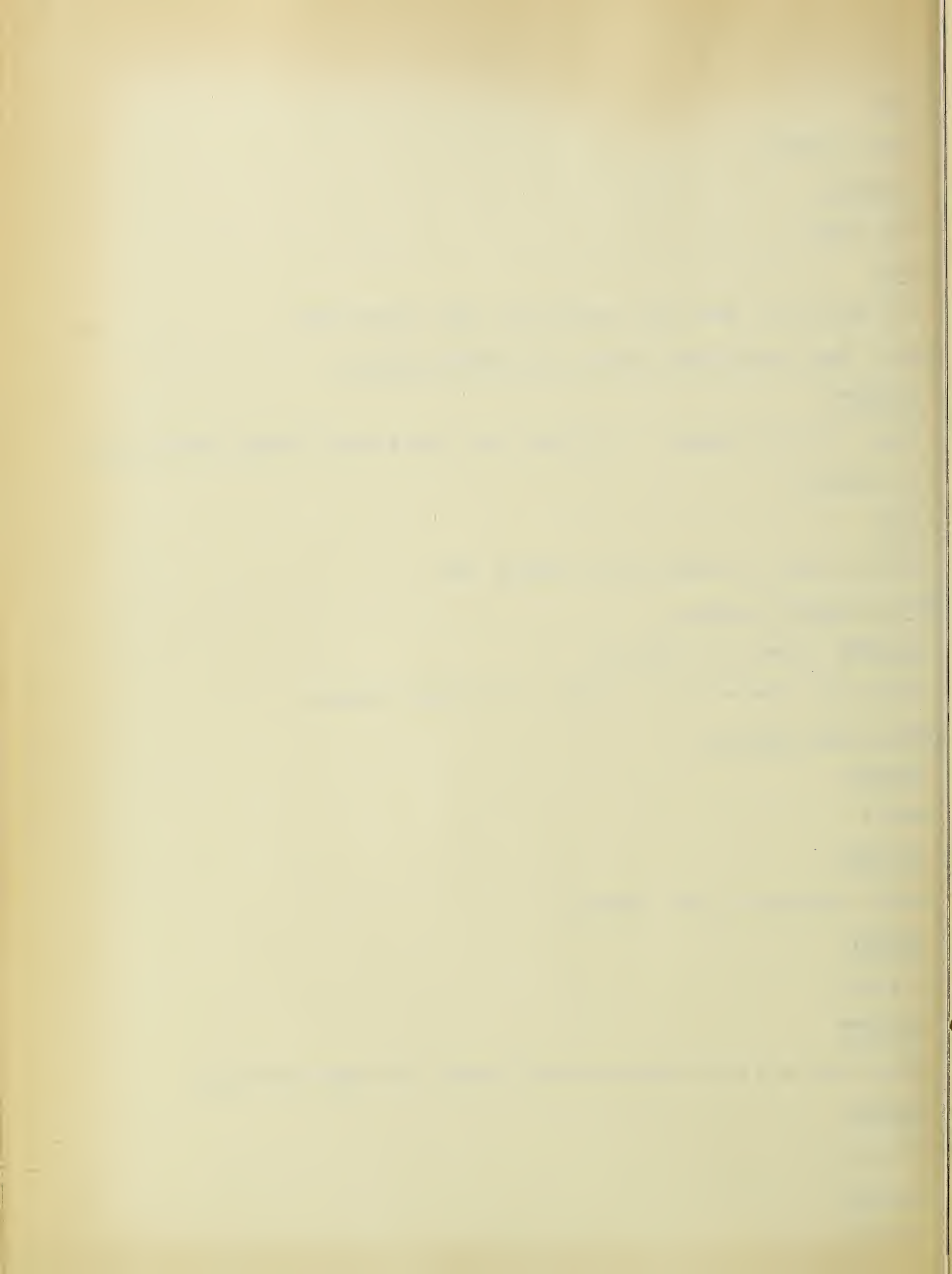
They told us at the road we could spend the night with you.

MURPHY

Come in.

ELLIOTT

Thanks.



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SOUND: Door closes...

MURPHY

I'll have my woman cook up some ham and coffee. Better beat out your bed, too.

ELLIOTT

Beat out our bed? What's that for?

MURPHY (chuckling)

Well, strangers, we don't use that bed much. Sometimes we find snakes hibernating in it.

NARRATOR

That night, while wind howled through the frozen wilderness and sleet rattled against the roof and window panes, we sat in solid comfort beside the open fire and listened to Old Man Murphy tell stories of this big land of Santeetlah and the Snowbird Mountains. He was quite a story-teller, too....(FADE)

MURPHY

....at that time, the country was full of turkey, and deer, and occasional like a big cat came out of the Smokies. And big trees! I remember, my brother-in-law cut off the top of a stump, put on a shake roof, and brought his wife to live until they could afford a better house. He never found time, or was too lazy to build another house -- anyhow, He raised his family in that tree. (ALL LAUGH)

ELLIOTT

That was a big tree. And we've seen a lot of them today, Mr. Murphy. They kinda remind me of Joyce Kilmer.

ORGAN: Sneak in symbolic music and keep soft in background...

MURPHY

Kilmer? Don't reckon I know him.

ELLIOTT

He's gone from us now. But he was a great man, a great poet, a great soldier. He wrote the poem, "Trees." And here's how it happened...

(FADE) ORGAN FADES OUT ALSO.

KILMER

Well, shall we climb this New Hampshire mountain today, Aline?

ALINE

Oh, you Irishman! What'll you suggest next?

KILMER

Come, come, my sweet. And don't call me an Irishman. Remember, I'm just half Irish...half Irish and half human.

ALINE

Alfred Joyce Kilmer, the irrepressible!

KILMER

And don't call me Alfred!

ALINE (teasing)

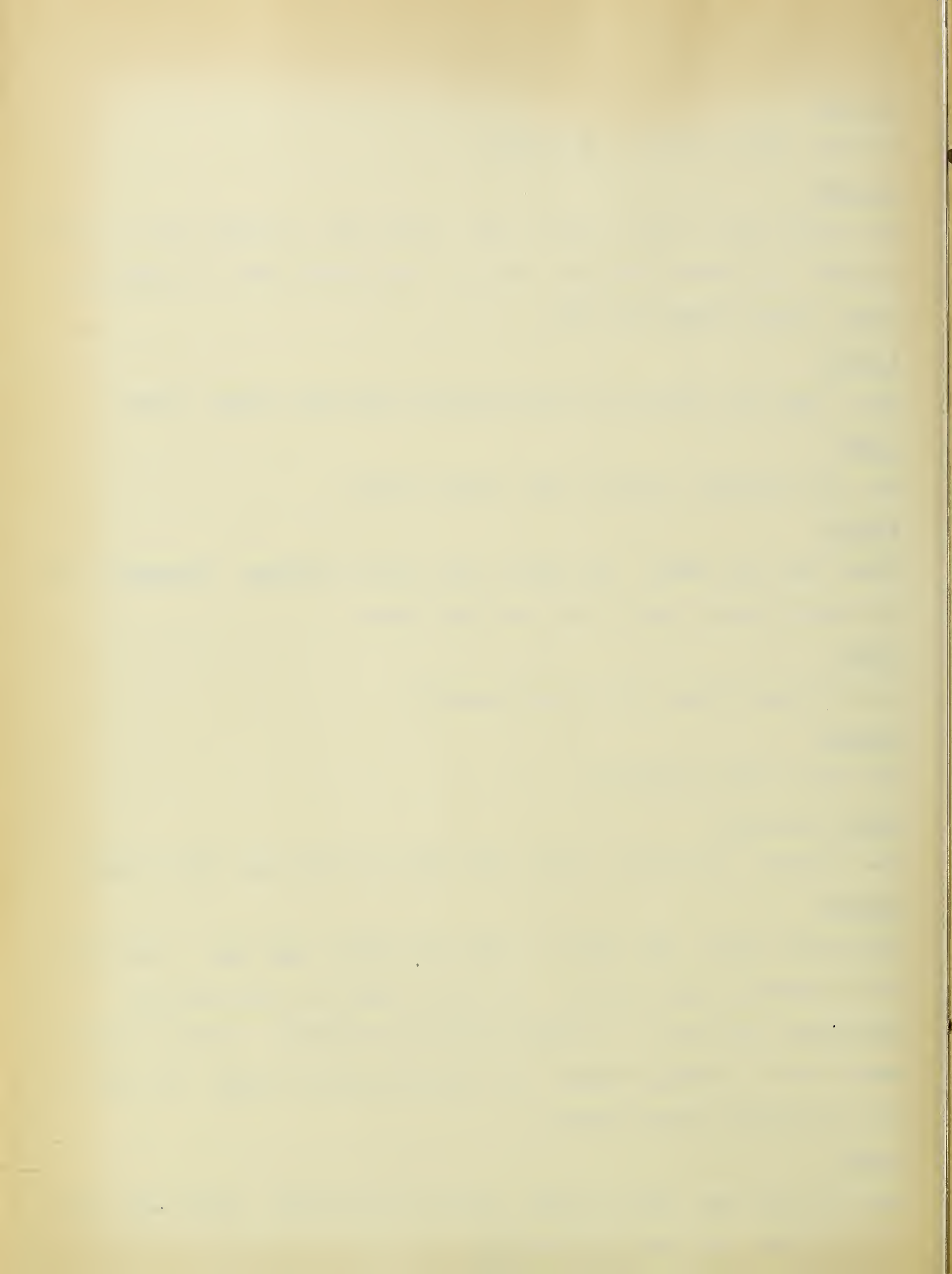
Now, Alfred...seriously, Joyce, why did you drop your first name?

KILMER

'Tis very simple. My sweet, I shall be famous some day. And I want to be known as Joyce Kilmer. You never heard of Booth Newton Tarkington, did you? Or Rudyard Ebenezer Kipling? Or Mark Anthony Twain? Or O. Jackson Henry? Or Joseph Mortimer Conrad? Oh, no.... it's just plain Joyce Kilmer.

ALINE

Have it your way, Joyce Kilmer, without the Alfred. After all, this is your home, and here you're king.



KILMER

And you're my queen. And this is our home, where man has God and love and life. All else may pass away, but these will stand.

ALINE

That's sweet, Joyce.

KILMER

And so are you, my pet. But come! Enough of this fol-de-rol! Put on your old gray bonnet, and let's climb the highest mountain, and look out over the world, and say...well, what would you say if you were looking out over the world?

ALINE

I'd say...why, I'd say...oh, come on!

KILMER

Then come on it is! Farewell, children, farewell!

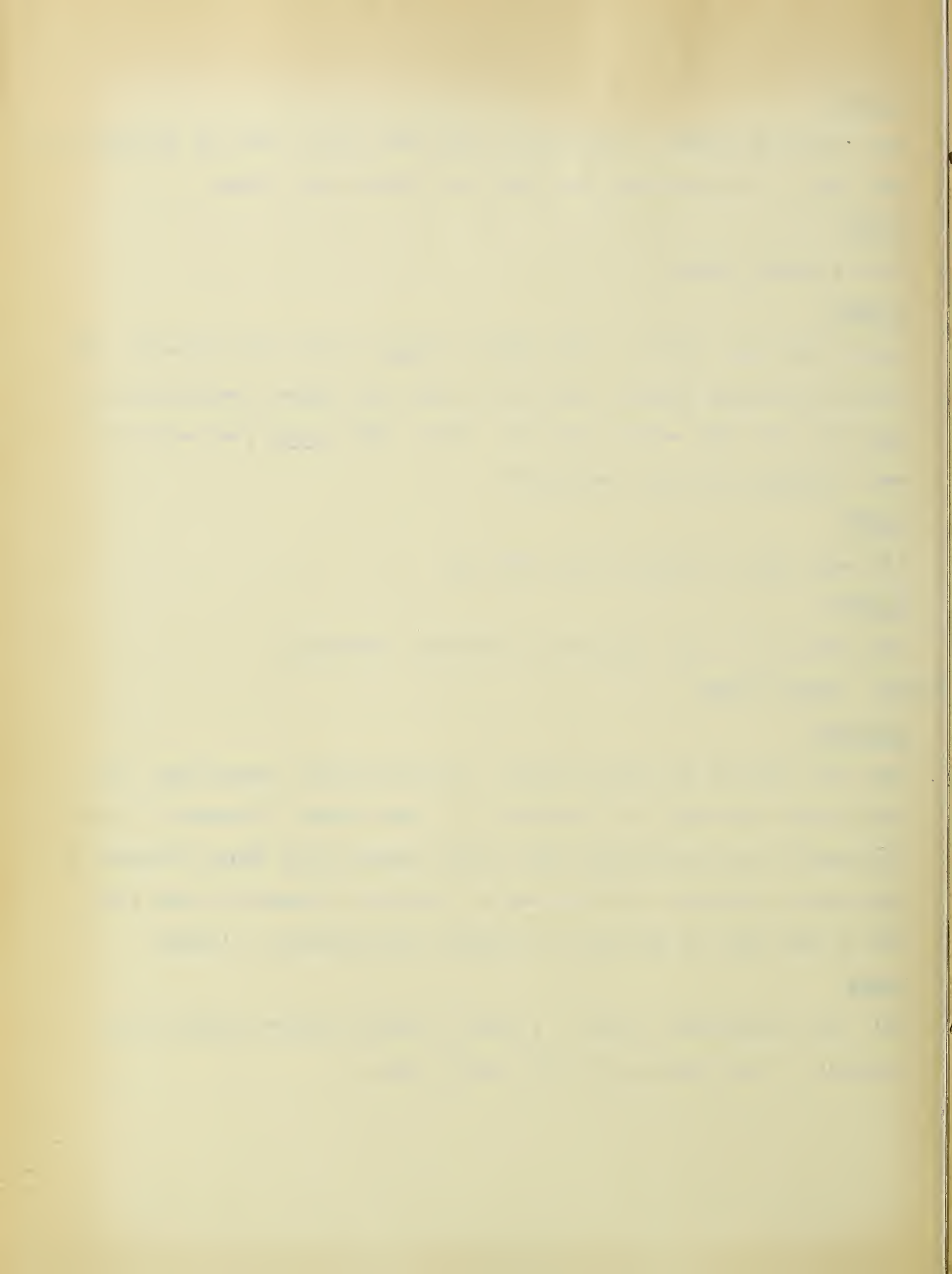
ORGAN: BRIEF BRIDGE

NARRATOR

That was typical of Joyce Kilmer...irrepressible, enchanting. He never said "so-long" or "goodbye". It was always "farewell." And "farewell" was the closing word of his famous poem Rouge Bouquet, a poem that, unbeknown to him, was to portray a chapter in his life. But on that day in Darien, he climbed the mountain... (FADE)

ALINE

Oh! It's beautiful, Joyce! I didn't realize nature could be so gorgeous. The coloring of the leaves, and...



KILMER (softly)

Yes, it is beautiful. You're looking at a forest, Aline, but more than that, you're looking at something you nor I can never comprehend. It's too vast, too magnificent, for any man to comprehend. This is something known but to God.

ALINE

I think I shall never see anything so beautiful.

ORGAN: Softly behind...

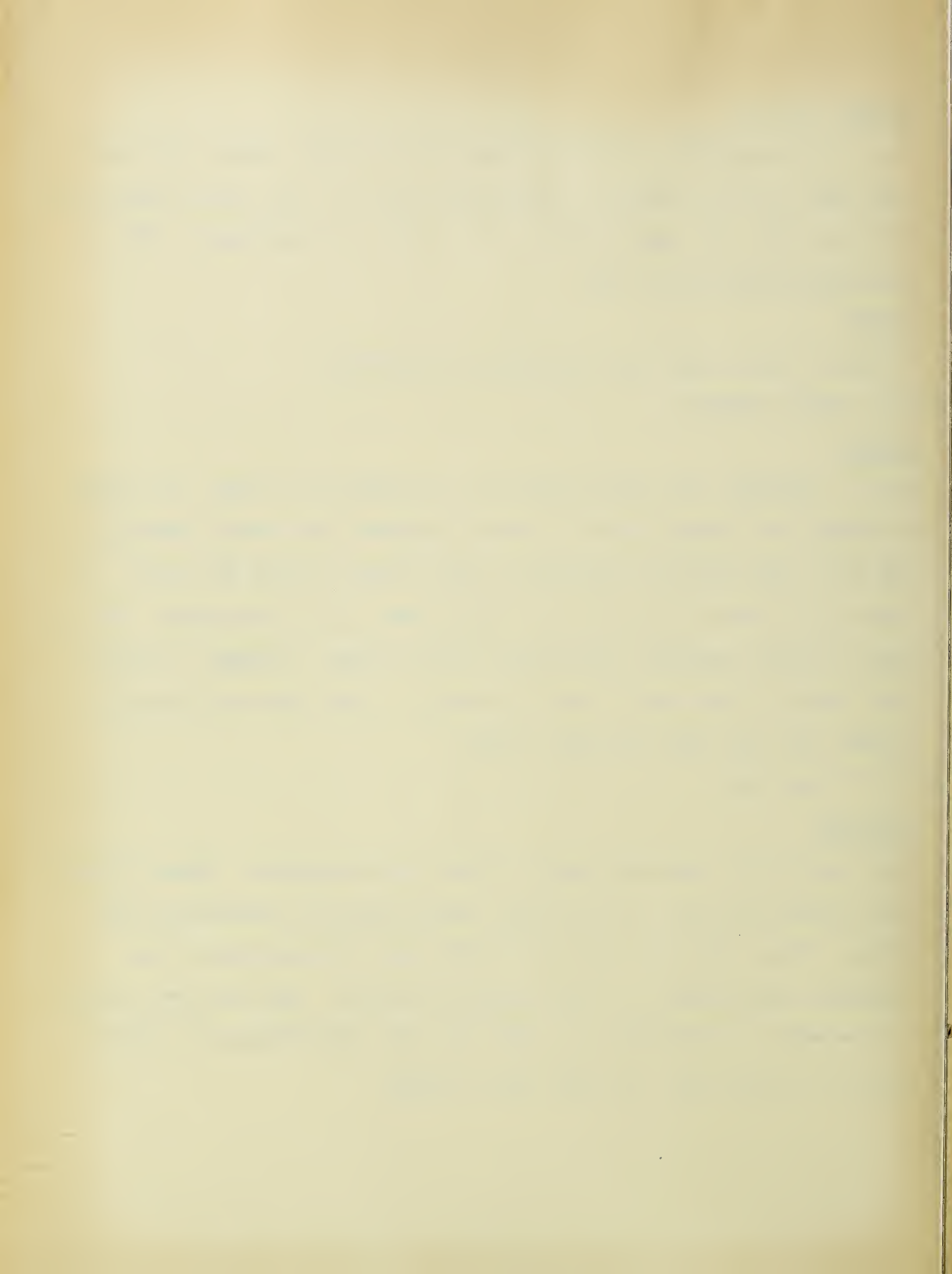
KILMER

Nor I. Nothing, not even a poem, is so lovely as a tree. It seems as though its hungry mouth is pressed against the earth, anchoring the soil, and gaining sustenance, just as men do from the soil. It looks up at God all day with its leafy arms, as if in prayer. Robins nest in those branches, snow rests in its bosom. (PAUSE) I think I shall write a poem about trees some day. A fool like me can write a poem, but only God can make a tree.

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

NARRATOR

That was how the immortal poem, "Trees", was inspired. Kilmer himself told friends that all of his other poems should be henceforth forgotten. Well, when the World War broke out, he enlisted in the "Fighting Sixty-Ninth" of the Rainbow Division. The World War ended, you remember, on November 11, 1918, but for Joyce Kilmer it ended on July 30 of that year. On that day...(FADE)



MAJOR

Sergeant Kilmer, that wood ahead of us hides a machine gun crew. We need a man to find the exact location of that machine gun.

KILMER

Reckon I'm your man, Major.

MAJOR

Good! You know what to do, Take a patrol with you....and....good luck.

KILMER

I'll need it. Well...farewell, children!

SOUND: Man crawling along ground, grunting, then...Whistle of bullet...

KILMER (on cue)

Oh.....farewell, children.....farewell.....

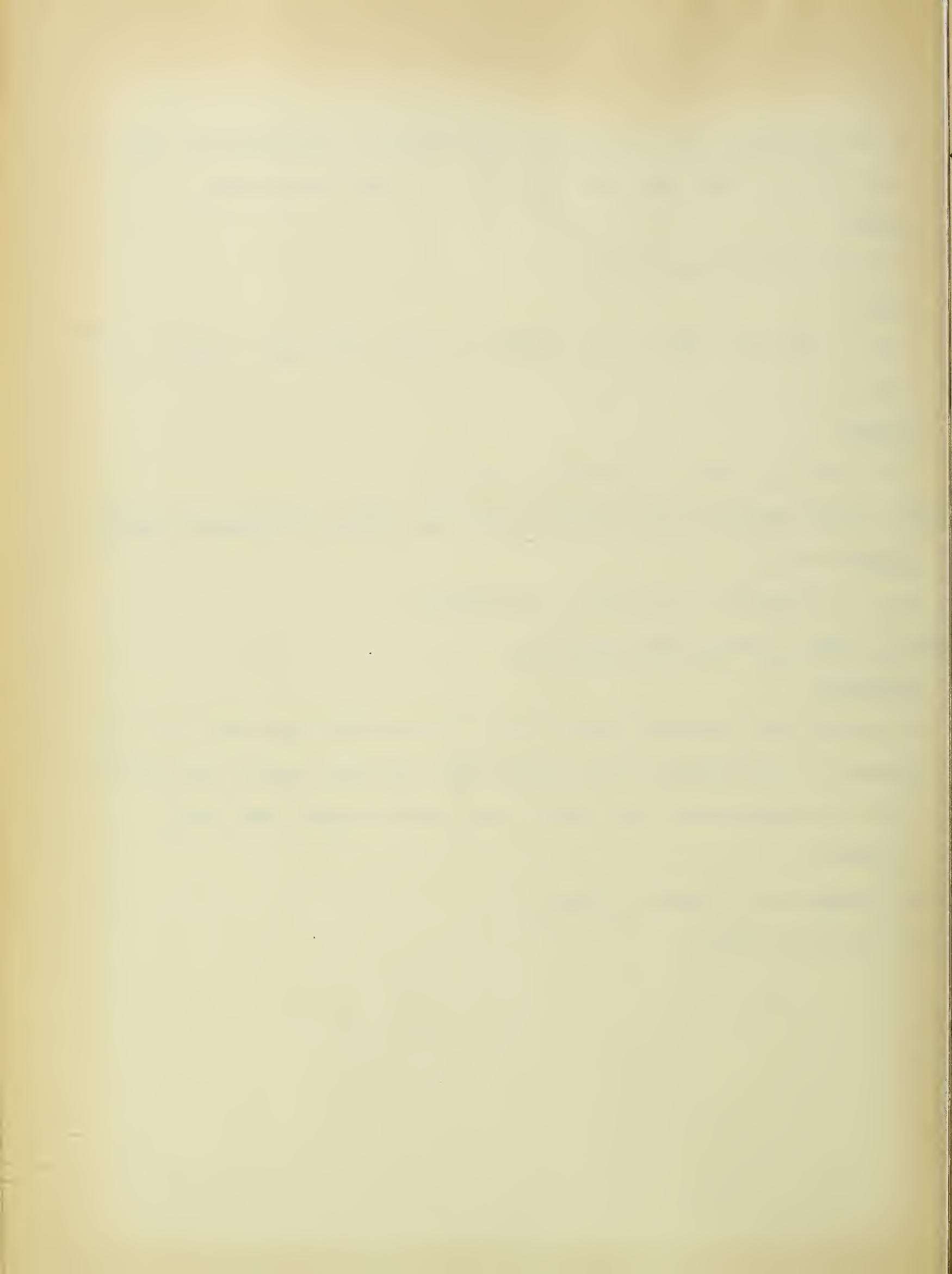
SOUND: Bugle playing taps behind...

NARRATOR

Oh, there is a new-made grave today in the wood they call the Rouge Bouquet. Joyce Kilmer wrote about that new-made grave, and about a cloud of bugle-notes that softly said, as he might have said, "farewell."

SOUND: Bugle up to finish, then...

ORGAN: Softly behind...



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NARRATOR

Exactly eighteen years after Joyce Kilmer crawled out across the muddy, shell-torn fields of France, the government of these United States set aside the memorial forest in the Snowbird Mountains. Here is unbroken wilderness, virgin solitude, a land of hushed forest aisles; a land of woodland monarchs and tiny flowers -- a living memorial to a great man who loved the trees, and the land they protect. And in the fern-filled glades, one thinks of William Cullen Bryant:

"The hills,
Rock ribbed and ancient as the sun; the vales
Stretching in pensive quietness between
The venerable woods; rivers that move
In majesty."

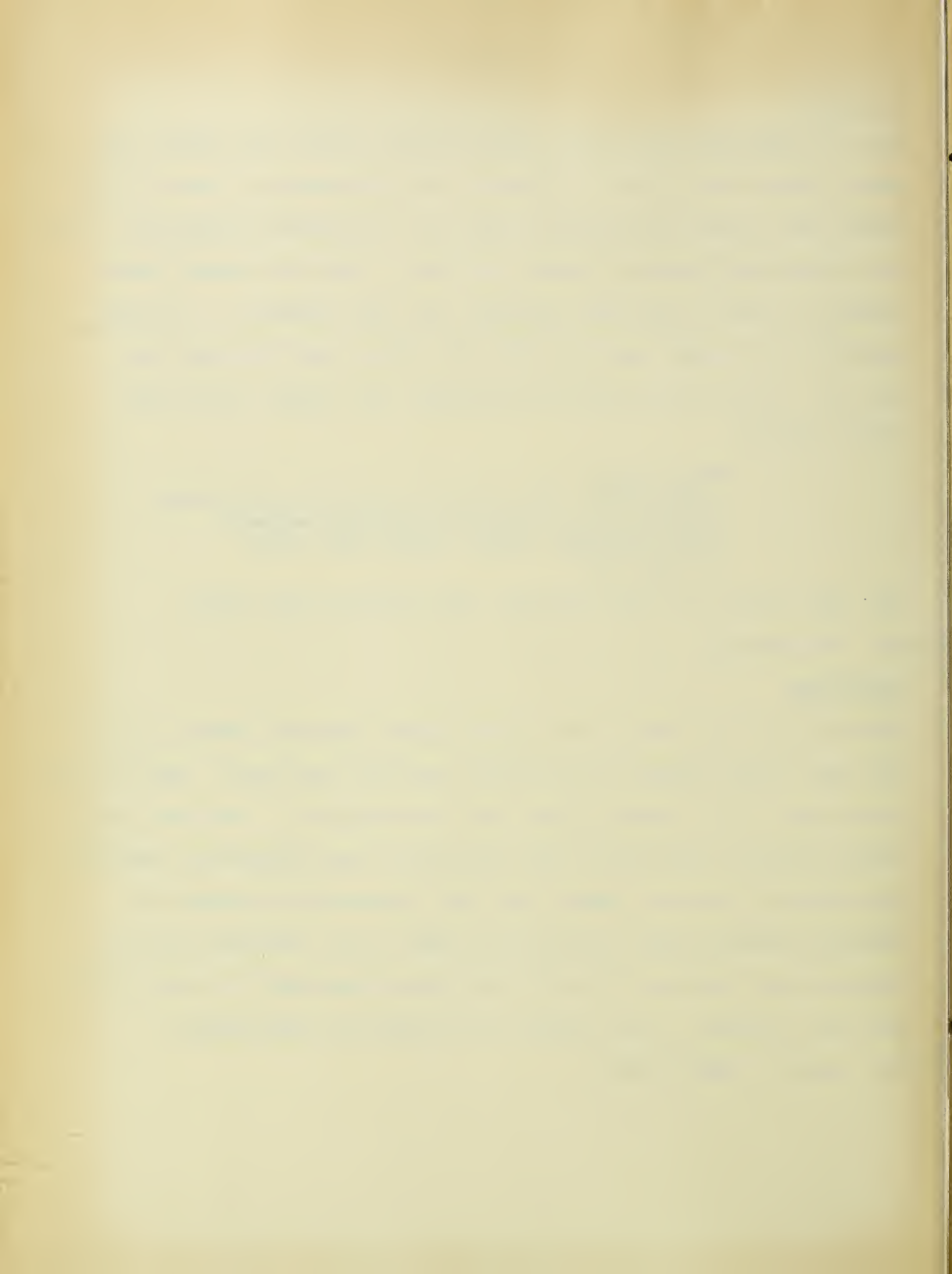
But ~~most~~ of all, of Joyce Kilmer, the man who loved trees.

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

ANNOUNCER

That is the true story of the Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest, one of the most loved shrines on the North American Continent. This is land never meant to be farmed, land that never will be. Its soils will remain forever anchored by the monarchs of the wilderness, monarchs untouched by the axe. This, the 179th consecutive episode of "Fortunes Washed Away", has been brought to you through the Soil Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture. And now, friends, if you please, the "Eleventh Commandment."

ORGAN: Sneak in DEEP RIVER.



ANNOUNCER

"Thou shalt inherit the holy earth as a faithful steward, conserving its resources and productivity from generation to generation. Thou shalt safeguard thy fields from soil erosion, thy living waters from drying up, thy forests from desolation, and protect thy hills from overgrazing by thy herds, so that thy descendants may have abundance forever. If any shall fail in this stewardship of the land thy fruitful fields shall become sterile stony ground and wasting gullies, and thy descendants shall decrease and live in poverty or be destroyed from off the face of the earth."

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

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